



2007

Reflections



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S



WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

June - 2007











IAHV International Women's Conference Bangalore June 8 - 10, 2007
The Art of Living International Center, Bangalore



Dedicated to Amma
{Mother of His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar
and to all Mothers.}





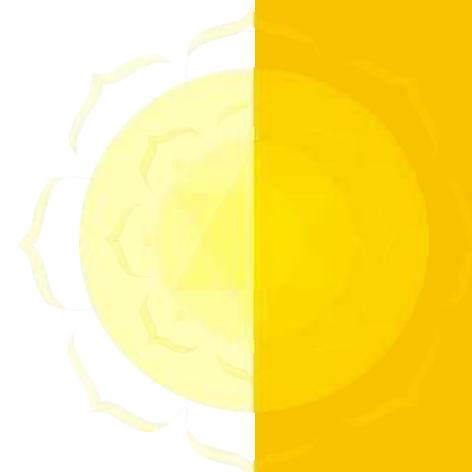
Introduction

After the resounding success of the First International Women's Conference in June 2005, the Second International Women's Conference was held on the 8th, 9th and 10th of June 2007, at the Art of Living International Headquarters in Bangalore, India.

In Sanskrit, Shakti means the driving force behind creation. It represents the eternal feminine principle. And is instrumental in positive social transformation. The theme of this year's conference was the three Shaktis: Icha Shakti or Strength in Will, Kriya Shakti or Strength in Action and Gyana Shakti or Strength in Knowledge. The 2nd International Women's Conference brought together women from all walks of life and many different organizations; from over 50 countries from First Ladies to Ministers to Mayors to Members of Parliament to social reformers and women from the villages of India and Africa. The 2nd International Women's Conference was partnered by the International Association for Human Values and Ved Vignan Maha Vidya Peeth, VISTA India (Value Integrated Services to All Women), UNIFEM and Femina India, organizations that have promoted and supported women's issues for many years.

As technology shrinks the world and spirituality helps unite ideologies, women are beginning to lead the way to new a tomorrow. The conference echoed this sentiment and showcased feminine leadership in a variety of fields. For three days women shared their stories, inspired each other and, created an action plan to help empower women across the globe. Celebration, sharing, caring and service were the hallmarks of this event.

The discussions on day 1 emphasized Iccha Shakti or Strength in Will. The atmosphere of the conference was set the first day as a strong bond and a determination to create a will that would encourage all women to participate in global transformation developed between the participants. The Conference was inaugurated by H.H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, founder of the Art of Living and the International Association for Human Values, Mrs. Shiranthi **Rajapakse**, the First Lady of Sri Lanka and Mrs. Sarojni Jugnauth, the First Lady of Mauritius.



Inaugural Address by His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

In India the earth is called “Mother Earth”; you don't call it Father Earth. Mother Earth is in danger; the environment is in real danger today. We all have to put our minds together, our ideas together to find out how we can save our environment, how we can reduce pollution and of course how more and more women can represent our society in all fields of life. Though there is a positive trend, it is far from satisfactory. So, when we all sit together to discuss, that is *Gnana Shakti*, and when we make the commitment to do something about it, that is *Ichha Shakti*, then move on to action or *Kriya Shakti*.



Every conference should have two aspects. One is a discussion, brain storming session, but often conferences end where they begin. I know this conference will not end that way, but will end with an action plan. There should be an action plan made in every corner of the globe. What is it that we can do? How can we reduce domestic violence? How can we contribute towards educating the girl child? What about human rights violation? Wherever that happens, please step up, speak openly and suggest solutions as to how women from all over the world can join together to make their voices heard, to join hands and strengthen their resolve to achieve their goals. That would be very productive and useful. And during these deliberations have some fun as well!

Good ideas come to you when you are relaxed. For your intuition to be heightened, for the *Gnana Shakti*, *Ichha Shakti*, *Kriya Shakti* to be evoked in you, you need to be relaxed. You may think it strange, how you can relax when there are problems and issues to be resolved? I tell you, that is the skill in action, that is spiritual strength; to be relaxed when you are faced with a problem. It is then that you can think of ideas, when you need to be relaxed and when you can come back to your Self.

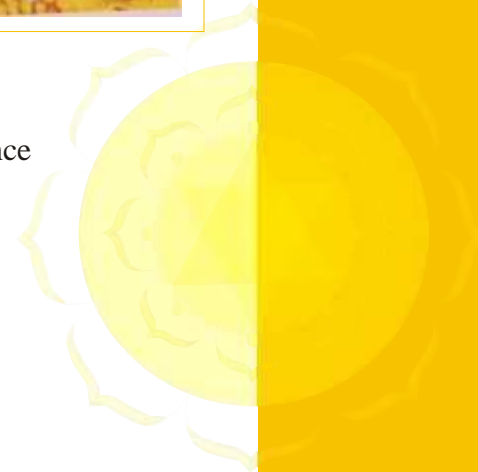
Women have silent, quiet strength and power. Do not wait to be given power, assume it. Unfortunately most of the feminine movements today are demanding rights. From whom are you demanding? You are asking from an empty chair, you have equal rights, own it, you simply have to assert your rights, you don't have to go and ask somebody, it is all there for you.

Indian Mythology has placed tremendous amount of power in women. In fact, power is equivalent to women. The power or the Shakti is the life force behind the whole creation. Each one of you is power, and you have all come together; so bring prosperity, happiness and joy to the world in whatever way possible!



Smt. Bhanumathi Narasimhan

Chaiperson, Of The Second International Womens Conference





Welcome address by Smt. Bhanumathi Narasimhan

Poojya Guru Dev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and my dear Sisters:

I welcome all of you here today. It is indeed a wonderful day for women. I am proud to share that women from almost 50 countries from diverse backgrounds; from the rural and the urban worlds; from the East and the West have come together here. I feel the strength of 50 nations behind me; that itself gives me a feeling of strength and empowerment. This strength is the essence of the 2nd International Women's Conference. This conference will explore the three strengths within each one of us: *Icha Shakti, Kriya Shakti, Gyan Shakti* i.e Strength in Will, Strength in Action and Strength in Knowledge.

Time seems to have flown by since the last conference two years ago, and yet I still feel the same warmth, enthusiasm and love which filled the hall then – right here, right now. We instituted the conference with a vision to create a platform for women of different backgrounds to come together. Our network of women from the First International Women's Conference has helped us grow – in confidence and strength. We are here to celebrate the successes of women; in both the outer world – in terms of material success; and in the inner world – bringing confidence, inner strength and a dynamic radiance. It is this unique combination of a woman's outer and inner strength that we seek to promote.

As empowered women, we have a major responsibility to create a more harmonious world around us. In the First Conference Sri Sri noted that "Men can inspire to fight, but women can inspire to unite." It is this spirit of unity and teamwork that has brought about this conference. The sunflower is the symbol of this conference. Just as the sunflower turns its face towards the sun; if all human beings turn towards the light of wisdom, we will bring joy and service to this planet. Yellow is the colour of cheerfulness, strength, auspiciousness and keen intellect. The need of the hour is spiritual values. I now call upon all the women leaders gathered here today to instill these human values in their spheres of influence – in their families, communities, at the local, national and global levels.

Most importantly, we must protect our Mother Earth as One Family. This is not a time to sit back and brood about the past. This is the hour to unite people with wisdom to end illiteracy, poverty, hunger, fanaticism, terrorism, violence, environmental damage and AIDS. Female foeticide is one of the major issues today and it is time to educate all cultures that the girl child is a boon; a gift. I am confident that the discussions over the next three days will help us to craft solutions to overcome these challenges.

We as women can make the difference, I believe we already are doing so and that is why we are here. I urge all my sisters present here to make use of this forum and bring about the transformation in society that people have been talking about for ages. Let us bring together our strengths in this forum, let us multiply our capabilities and form a network of women leaders committed to creating a more harmonious society. Let us use our inner strengths to transform the world around us.

S P E A K E R S



“Woman is a preserve of traditional values and culture, and has the opportunity of connecting the old world with the new.”

***H.E. First Lady of Sri Lanka
Mrs. Sriranthi Rajapakse,***



“Let us all work towards a crime free society by uplifting the human spirit and inculcating human values. There is no great man without a great mother.”

***H.E. First Lady of the Republic of Mauritius
Lady Sarojni Jugnauth,***



“The most important thing about woman leaders is that they have to believe in themselves.”

***Hon. Governor, Amman, Jordan
Ms. Rabiha Dabbas,***



“Self confidence is the most important power point of any leadership.”

***Honorable Member of Afghan Parliament
Mrs. Shukria Barakzai,***

Day 1

Day 1

S P E A K E R S

“Where women are honored, there the Gods are pleased. Where they are not honored, all work become fruitless. Mannu, Manusmriti) ...Treat your mother as Goddess (Matra devo bhava).”

**Hon.Member of Parliament, India,
Ms.Hema Malini, MP India**



“Women have the three H's, Heart, Healing and Humanity. Men have the three M's, Muscles, Money and Mobility.”

Ms. Kiran Bedi, Indian Police Service, Magasay Award Winner, Former Special Advisor to the United Nations, India



“A tree and a woman have a lot in common when a tree is cut, the environment suffers and when a woman is lost, and not honoured womanhood is destroyed, her family suffers with her and the whole society also” suffers through this conference the whole world will benefit.....

**Honorable Minister for Women and Child Welfare,
Chatisgarh, India Ms. Lata Usendi,**



“Spiritual capital echoes the function of an inner presence of deeper meaning. Our collective values, vision, purpose and basic vision of being.”

**Liora Katzenstein, Founder - President, ISEMI
(The Institute of the Study of Entrepreneurship
and Management of Innovation), Israel**



S P E A K E R S



“I thought really we need to make people smile, I put together the biggest party Lebanon has ever seen in history....30 thousand people attended.....and we called it “I Love life”In most Indo-European languages, life is a feminine wordSo here is to life.”

***Asthma Maria Andraos,
Founder of Amam 05,UNDP Consultant, Lebanon***



“It is also our corporate social responsibility to help under-privileged women to achieve economic freedom. I believe every woman must learn how to earn a living and support herself....”

Ms. Kavita Tulsidas, Stylemart, Singapore



“ I believe as Nelson Mandela said, as Gandhi had said, in all of us exists an inherent great potential, in all of us there is magic, in all of us there exists an amazing God-given wisdom....”

Rita Patel, Peepul Foundation, United Kingdom



June 2006 along with 26 other Kuwaiti women I had an opportunity to run for the Parliament and speak my mind..... going through election was like an infant taking a step there were hurdles but a door was opening for women in Kuwaiti - the first and most important lesson that will plan a path for women in politics

Nabila Al Anjar, Businesswoman, Kuwait

Day 1

Countries participating at the 2nd International Women's Conference

Afghanistan

Argentina

Australia

Belgium

Botswana

Cameroon

Canada

China

Croatia

Denmark

Egypt

Ethiopia

France

Finland

Germany

India

Indonesia

Iran

ISRAEL

Italy

Japan

Jordan

Kenya

Kuwait

Lebanon

Lithuania

Malaysia

Mauritius

Mongolia

Nepal

Netherlands

New Zealand

Norway

Pakistan

Panama

Philippines

Qatar

Russia

Singapore

Slovenia

South Africa

Sri Lanka

Taiwan

Turkey

Sweden

United Arab Emirates

United Kingdom

United States of America

Zimbabwe



S P E A K E R S



“We are all haunted by the desire for the real. Our survival demands solutions, there is the inner landscape and outer landscape, and both are equally divine. The inner of course is tangible; the outer is divine in its own way.”

Ms. Imrana Tiwana,
Architect Pakistan.



“Women are natural humanitarians, and they figure out win win situations, we need to have more humanitarians going into business these days, because they are vision driven and they have found a way to redefine what a profit is”.

Ms. Denise Cerreta,
One World Everybody Eats Café, USA



“Health and environment alone don't take us where we want to go, there has to be an element of justice and that means equality in all dimensions, for all people....”

Dr. Ruth Allen,
USEPA, Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP), Health Effects Division (HED), Epidemiology Team Leader, USA



“There is hope and there is love, that's why we have come here to share all this with you, together we can make a difference and all those people who have lost their loved ones we can become their loved ones.”

Ms. Saniya Gul, Social Worker, Pakistan

Day 2

Day 2

S P E A K E R S

“Action to empower women can only be improved by putting the human rights of women at the heart of your programs and policies in addressing issues that are relevant to them. It is not about having a single intervention but a continuous process about building the capacity of women to take control of their lives....Know that you are a woman of substance that is going to take action.”

Ms. Cookie Edwards, KZN Network on Violence against women, South Africa



“I would like to dedicate this presentation to our girls, who are our future. They are the women for whom we are working for. I hope that the actions we take will be for their betterment of environmental sustainability for the future.”

Prof. Fiona Haslam Mckenzie, Director Housing and Urban Research Institute of Western Australia and Acting Executive Director, John Curtin Institute of Public Policy, Australia



“Whatever challenges you have, overcome them with greater and greater strength.... because you are women, you will be able to do this”

***Hon Mayor of New Delhi
Ms Arti Mehra,***



“The role of women to continue integration and uniting people with knowledge based societies is crucial for development of our countries of the world and for sustainable development.

***Darja Piciga,
Ministry of Education, Slovenia***



S P E A K E R S



“Total independence can only come by when the majority control the means of production of their God given natural resources”

Hon. Senator Dr. T. Mutinhiri, Deputy Minister of State for Indigenisation and Empowerment, Zimbabwe.



“If you give food to a woman, you are ensured of a nations feeding, that's why income generation is done through the women's association of trade”

Hon S.A.E Damasane, Deputy Minister of Womens Affairs, Gender and Community Development, Zimbabwe.



“The Almighty has considered what virtues a human being could posses and has given most of them to a woman, He has given to women the highest mission on the planet, to give life... In our nation we say, heaven is where your mother stands.... We should respect all the mothers”

Hon. Ms. Zata Tashtamirova, Chechnyan Member of Parliament, Russian Federation and Head of Parliament Committee for Women, Family and Youth Affairs.



“In each of us there is a spark that helps us to do random acts of kindness, we don't know where and how it's going to materialize in the future...”

Amy Fernandes, Editor in-Chief, Femina Magazine, India

Day 2

Day 2

S P E A K E R S

“As women we have two forces, the one intuition and the other is passion. These forces can transform our environment. By our intuition we see clearly something in our environment is going wrong, we get serious signs from nature itself. We must pay attention to them, and we must open our eyes...Our second choice is passion, this is the force to transform our environment.”

Ms Margaretha Guidone, Socialist Party, Belgium



“Before I used to doubt my abilities, now I'm powerful, because I know myself....As women our power is our love, compassion, empathy, I simply say, simply be women”.

Ms Ligja Brown Lasso, Assistant to VP and Director of the Equal Opportunities Office, Government of the Republic of Panama



“Today all of us have decided to start a new life, break the barriers that are there and say that we want a better world we are responsible, and we have the power to change the society, we are the first teachers of our children to change these paradigms and social codes, we are the ones who are powerful..”

Maria del Pilar Arias de Arosemena, Wife of Vice President, Panama



“The change is going to happen in spite of us, whether we come to a conference, talk to each other about it or not, it's going to happen, the point is, can we hasten that process...some of us who have the voice can we be the voice for the voiceless...”

Nandita Das, Actor and Social Activist, India



S P E A K E R S



“M is for the million things that you give us.
O only means that you never grow old.
T is the time you tolerate us.
H is for your heart of purest gold.
E is for your eyes so warm and tender.
R is right and always so sincere.
Put them all together, they spell MOTHER, words that I always revere.”

Usha Uthup, India



“We want to celebrate the beauty of the feminine, in order to bring back life, fertility and harmony...The feminine lives in the dimension of the present I t is able to approach joy, magic ,unconditional love ,grace ,it is also able to see with the heart, not only with the eyes, finding the divine unity everywhere.”

Susanne Garavaglia, Therapist, Italy



“My cosmic greeting today....it is the rhythm of Uranus, and has a beautiful message for all of us for men and women because Uranus is the birth of an individual in balance with female and male aspects, each of us has the unique mixture of these balances.”

Dr. Greta Tuellmann, Germany Journalist



“The feminine knows well that in the seed, the whole tree is already present, and is able to see every aspect not only for what it is, but also for what it will become.”

Dede Riva, Psychologist, Italy

Day 2
& 3

Day 3

“If we hold hands and try to help each other in every single way possible, then guess what...? Life rocks!”

Ms. Nadine Kreisberger, Journalist, CBS News, France



“We have a big responsibility as women, and I believe every woman can bear a child, you don't have to do anything for it, nature does it. The main thing of being a good mother, is raising or bringing up the children so they can be independent”.

Ms. Senay Ozdemir, Editor in Chief, SEN Magazine, Netherlands



There's not a woman here who can stand up and say, I cannot speak from the heart. We were created to speak from the heart”.

Ms. Nolene Peterson Joan, Kwazulu Natal, South Africa



“Today as I talk to you, I want to honor all women because of the support they give to each other, I am not going to call you women, I am going to call you eagles.....whenever I took a step there was a mother eagle close to me....the dance then that has to happen from this conference is the dance for better world....”

Ms. Nomi Sangweni, Executive Director, Data World, South Africa



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“We mothers do we ever ask schools to teach our children, what we want them to become.....we dream a lot ,but we don't pull our voices together.”

Mrs.Dhunookchand, chief Technical Officer, Ministry of Education, Government of Mauritius



“An education that reflects the culture and tradition of a place, and also enables children to respect and value .the culture and religion of other places is what we need today.”

Reshma Rao, Faculty, Sri Sri Ravishankar Vidya Mandir Schools (SSRVM)



When you look at some of the great factors that India brings to the world it is definitely the power of secularism a country where people from all the religions have been allowed to co-exist so much so that places of worship have welcomed people from all faiths and places.

Ms. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, CEO, Biocon Industries, India



We need to find ways and means to get to the inner person.....to be reintegrated into society. AOL has been able to go to the inner self of the inmates and the government actually supports us.

Ms E Banda, Rehabilitation Coordinator, Zimbabwe Prison Services

Day 3

Day 3

S P E A K E R S

“In India, I know men are dependant right from their birth till they die. As a child, on their mother and sisters, when they get married they are dependent on their wives, and in their old age if there wives are not there they are dependent on their daughters.”

***Dr. Vinoda Kochupilla, Former Head of Neurology,
All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) India***



“Today 's woman is capable of placing herself on equal terms, in work, profession and cultural life, without men feeling cast away, she learnt how to broaden the path to social improvement and through that to the possibility of self-realization.”

Hon. Minister Ms.Dr. Marcelo Losardo, Argentina



“During the June 2005, Women's conference the partnership between the UNFPA and the Art of Living started. Guruji called for an interfaith religious meeting where many religious leaders came together and condemned the killing of the girl child.”

***Ms. Urmila Bendre,
Advisor Gender and Community UNFPA, India***



“The most important awareness and most valuable information for men, women and children is to make them understand the role of women in social and economic transformation because women obviously, directly and indirectly contribute to the social and economic transformation of any society.”

***Prof. Pamela Naidoo, Head of Psychology, University of Western Cape,
South Africa***



Day 3

1994 saw the democratization and eased conditions for women in the services. Out of 163000, 46 000 are women, each represents courage, strength and dynamism, creating a task force for women....

Mala Singh, Deputy National Commissioner HRM & Legal Services, South Africa



If I say there is sunshine outside or rain somebody get an umbrella everybody will come, but if I say there is war there is terrorism is there someone who can get me peace - no one can give me peace because we cannot define peace.

Special Secretary Planning, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, Mrs. Roma Wani, India.



Government has given high priority to protection of women. Women shall have enjoyment of rights by this constitution.

Madam Meseret Abate, Hon. Member of Parliament Ethiopia



“Let us pledge to strengthen ourselves so that men will see us strong, meaningful and start following us and not victimizing us, then the world will become a cradle of peace.”

Director General Of Police India Ms. Jija Singh



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Awards & Honours

The Vishalakshi Award recognizes outstanding contributions by women leaders in economic, social and cultural spheres.

It is instituted in memory of the mother of H. H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. This award honors women who have excelled in visible and high-profile roles, as well as those who have worked selflessly 'behind the scenes' to make a difference in this world.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Smt. Revathy Ramakrishna for promoting the traditional Indian art forms.



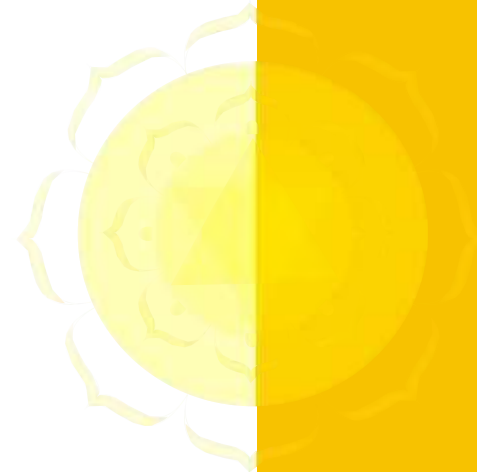
The Vishalakshi award is given to Mrs. Babloo Sen for her contribution to Value Education.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Gayathri, nightingale of the Art of Living .



The Vishalakshi award is given to Mrs. Geetha Venkatesh for her timely services in the Tsunami affected areas of Nagapattinam.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Ms. Radhika Rai for empowering Women in rural Karnataka.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Ms. Reshma Ganesh for outstanding contribution to value education.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Ms. Mohana for her contribution in the field of Carnatic Music



The Vishalakshi award is given to Ms. Richa Chopra for her campaign against female foeticide.





The Vishalakshi award is given to Smt. Nanavati as a mother who has encouraged all her daughters to serve humanity selflessly.



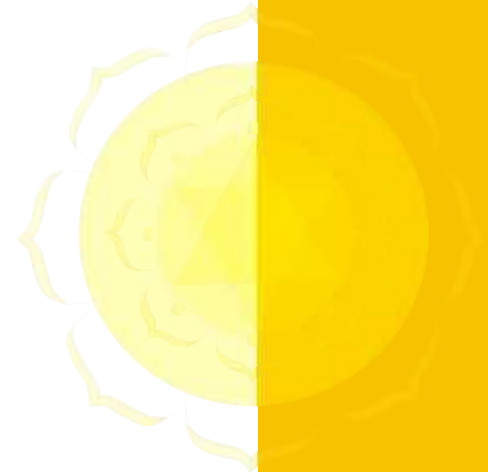
The Vishalakshi award is given to Mrs. Bharathy Harish for reviving ancient Indian culture.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Ms. Late Userdi Minister for Woman and Child Welfare, Chattisgarh India for contribution towards upliftment of Women.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Ms. Padma & Gayatri Srinivasan for enthusiasm and entrepreneurship 'age no bar'.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Mrs. Akhila Srinivasan for her excellence in entrepreneurship.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Mrs. Sharmila Morarka for her commitment towards promoting rural arts and handicrafts.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Ms. Hema Sardesai for her contributions to Music.



The Vishalakshi award is given to Ms. Mawahib Shaibani for her tireless work in the prisons of Iraq and Pakistan.





The Unsung Heroine

Over 300 rural women from all over India attended the conference. At first they were shy and kept to themselves. Slowly, they opened up, shared stories and experiences, participated and voiced opinions, sang, danced and rejoiced... With their silent strength, these rural women, in the face of oppression, have risen to bring about the change in their lives, homes, families and communities. We continue to learn from them everyday.

Janaki, Karnataka

"I am so thankful for this opportunity to be here at this wonderful conference. For many years I felt life was unfair and that I had been dealt a bad deal. I suffered a lot and could only focus on my own troubles and myself. Then I did the YLTP* course... Now I work for society, my health has improved and my focus is: 'What can I do to make a better world?'"

Janvi, Orissa

"I was a shy and scared human being. 4 years ago I did the YLTP course and now I know I can do anything I set my heart to. Today I am the "sarpanch" (president) of our village governing body. Our team has touched the lives of 5000 women in and around my village. My vision is to change the lives of all rural women in India."

Eskalon, Tripura

"I thought I was nothing and had nothing. Then at 17 I did the YLTP course. Now, at 22, I work for the government, teach Breath Water Sound` courses, form self-help groups for rural women and take care of two tribal schools. I now have everything and need nothing more."

Babita, student of Sri Sri Vidya Mandir Tribal School, Jhardkand

"I am so happy to be here. I study in SSRVM`. I love my school. Besides academics, we also learn stitching, yoga, singing and dancing. Earlier there was no school in my village, and that is why many children still do not attend. I go to their homes and convince them to start coming to school. On holidays we teach the villagers about hygiene and cleanliness. We plant trees. Come to my school. I will be so happy to look after all of you and show you around."

Youth Leadership Training Programme (YLTP)

The Youth Leadership Training Program` aims at training youngsters in a number of areas like health, hygiene, education, solid waste management , housekeeping etc. and channeling their energy and talents into mobilizing and strengthening people to work towards fulfilling their own community's needs.

Breath-Water-Sound

The Breath-Water-Sound teaches basic breathing techniques, satsangs and values of hygiene and harmony. Also called the Nav Chetana Shibir it has been enthusiastically received in the villages and slums, enabling one and all to find more harmony, joy and health.

Sri Sri Ravishankar Vidya Mandir (SSRVM)

Our Schools for underprivileged children focus on the child's over all personality development. The state curriculum is taught in English but students learn the local languages as well.



Performances

Parampara

On Day 1 of the conference, celebrated Member of Parliament of India, actor and Bharatanatyam dancer, Hema Malini enthralled the audience with her 'Parampara', a dance ballet which she performed with her two daughters and her troupe. 'Parampara' portrays the mother as the child's first guru, based on the belief in the Vedic tradition that the guru-shishya relationship exists between a parent and child.

Parashakti

Parashakti or the Supreme Shakti, was performed by Smt. Rashmi Hegde Gopi and her troupe on Day 2 of the conference. Smt. Hegde is an extremely accomplished dancer and founder- Managing Trustee of the Shankara Centre for Fine Arts. Her rich repertoire is a tapestry of various styles- Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam. She has been bestowed with the most prestigious Karnataka Rajyotsava Award for the Life Time Achievement in the year 2002.

Shringara

A solo performance by Smt. Rashmi Hegde, Shringara: The moods of a woman.

Creation is full of diversity and colour. As varied as these colours are the emotions and moods of a woman. In her performance, these emotions were depicted through the character of Satyabhama in her interaction with Lord Krishna. The depth of any emotion can take you to yourself, to the source of divinity within. The movement from Shringara (outer beauty) to Sundara (Inner beauty) transpires in Satyabhama through her devotion to the Lord Krishna.

The Dynamism of Women – A Celebration

A vibrant and forceful performance by the eminent singer and performer, Smt. Usha Uthup captivated the audience on the final day of the conference. Every single person in the 500 strong crowd was on their feet, dancing and celebrating the strength of a woman. Smt. Usha performed in various Indian and international languages, bringing together sisters from across the globe. "It's time to rewrite the history, for we have to move ahead," she said.

"Queen of Clowns"

Ekaterina Moshava "Antoschka", the queen of clowns is more than just a painted face. With a diploma in direction from the Moscow State Theatre School, she has been star clown at the state circus where she did over 300 performances a year for twenty years. In 2006 she launched her own new project: World Parliament of Clowns. With her performance at the conference, she showed us why and how having fun should simply just be a way of life!

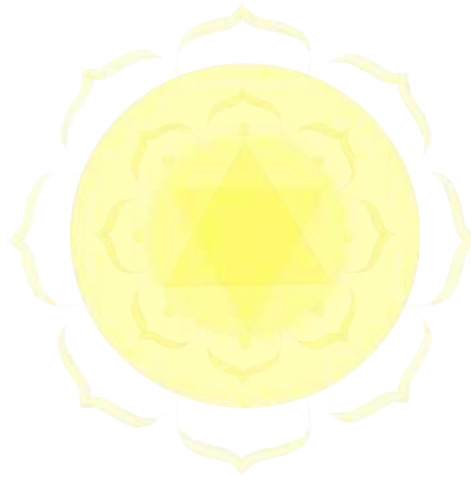
Rock Solid Power of Life!

Hema Sardesai is one of the most popular singers in India today. She is equally at ease singing in Hindi, English or Marathi, be it Indian Classical, Indian film, Western pop or Spiritual folk music. At the conference, her performances had the entire crowd reveling in the sheer energy of her voice and music. 'Power of Life', the song she specially composed for the Women's Conference carried messages of 'Save the Girl Child', 'Global Warming', 'Women's Empowerment' and 'Shakti'. Over and over again, with this song, delegates reaffirmed their faith and belief that women can indeed change the world!



The Tejaswini Exhibition

Tejaswini is the inward journey towards perfection purification and peace. The Tejaswini exhibition explained the five aspects of creation, creation being matter and consciousness and Shakti being the womb of all creation. Shakti is therefore expressed as the mother aspect of the Divine. Different functional aspects of this divine energy have different names and forms. A beautiful display of exquisite brass idols of Goddesses depicting the different aspects of Shakti such as Durga, Lakshmi, Mahishasuramardini, Kali, Annapoorni, Meenakshi, Kamakshi and Vishalakshi was shown. The Tejaswini or the inward journey was depicted through the Sree Yantra, a symbolic representation of the Mother Goddess, a diagrammatic representation of the mantras.



Pre-Conference Objectives

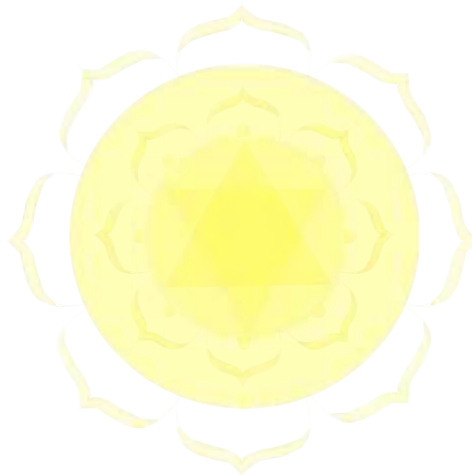
As a build up to the conference, the Art of Living – International Association for Human Values (IAHV) pledged to:

Rehabilitate the lives of 1,000 women prisoners across the world

In prisons in Germany, Morocco, Indonesia, South Africa, Australia, India and many more countries, lives of women inmates have been transformed. In Bangalore, India, along with the Prison Programme, yoga training courses are also conducted at the Bangalore Central Jail. A vocational centre - agarbatti rolling, gift and handicraft manufacturing and tailoring - provides employment to the inmates. These products are now successfully marketed by the Art of Living under the brand name 'Punarnava' meaning 'New once again'. A computer training centre for the inmates has also been set up.

In Australia, the women reported that they were less stressed and drug dependant and were able to sleep better. In South Africa, courses were conducted in Leeukop, Boksburg, Pollsmore and in the Westville Maximum Security Prison in Kwazulu Natal. Women experienced greater understanding and value for life after going through the programme.

In Germany, one prison inmate said, "Finally I can rest. Thank you for that. Life now is beautiful." In Jakarta, Indonesia at the LP Wanita Tangerang women's prison, one prisoner reported, "Every night I have cried. Every day I have felt anger and frustrations. But now after the course I have accepted my situation and am happier now and can be a good mother to my children."



Pre-Conference Objectives

Educating 500 girls children in India.

At the Ved Vignan Maha Vidya Peeth, Bangalore, and the many rural and tribal schools across India, over 800 new girl students enrolled at the start of the new term.

At the VVMVP Rural School, 46% of the 2,500 students are girls. Shilpa, a student at the school, on receiving her 10th grade examination ticket, says, "For the first time I feel that women are not beneath men, that we are equals."

The first Sri Sri Vidya Mandir Tribal School was started in 1999 in the E. Singhbhum district, Jharkand. Today there are 69 tribal schools, including 5 slum schools, with 6084 students. Over 40% of the children are girls. The organisation is striving to make this a 50:50 ratio.

Kaushalya: A doctor in the making...

Kaushalya a resident of Prindrabad village situated near a Sri Sri Vidya Mandir school, Haludbani village, Jharkhand was like any other girl in that village with no opportunity to go to school because there was none near her village. Once Sri Sri Vidya Mandir was established in 2001, she was provided with that opportunity.

After five years she is emphatic and determined to become a doctor. Why? The prompt reply is "to serve my village". She proves her point that service to her people is life's aim as she now assists and counsels the KG class one-hour everyday before going to her higher school. The children love her because they feel a sense of belonging with someone from their own neighborhood who understands their language and is patient to relate to the problems of a first generation learner. She has a perfect track record - she was always first in her class.

'Yaadien', a musical evening by Smt. Chitra Roy, was held on 13 may 2007 in New Delhi in aid of the 'Gift-A-Smile' project, sponsoring the education of rural children. The evening was a huge success with the event raising funds of nearly Rs. 20 lakh (US\$ 50,000)

Outcomes

Conference ends with a Commitment to Educate 10,000 girls

International Alliance of Women Leaders (IAWL) formed for Implementation of Outcomes

The three-day International Women's Conference culminated with a pledge to strengthen the intention and passion for resolving women's issues and challenges.

Pledge

Led by conference chairperson Smt. Bhanumathi Narasimhan, the delegates affirmed,

“Let us pledge to always keep alive the strength of our intention and passion to work towards resolving women's issues and challenges. Let us pledge to build networks globally and locally to search for relevant information on these issues and educate ourselves with tools to resolve them. Let us pledge to be committed to take concrete steps towards fulfilling our action plans.”

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN LEADERS (IAWL)

IAWL, a special group was constituted at the conference under the aegis of the International Association for Human values, with women representatives from 50 countries coming together. IAWL's primary aim is to empower women, from all walks of life, all across the globe.

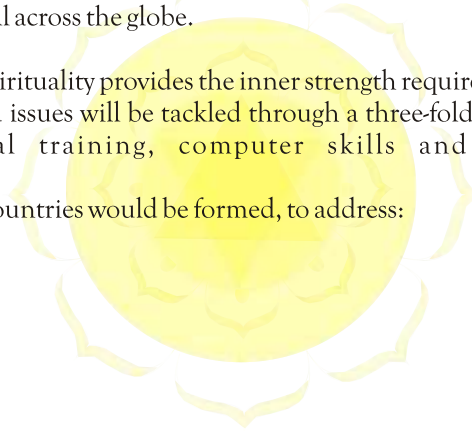
It also aims to create an awareness that spirituality provides the inner strength required to life's challenges with a smile. Urban and rural poverty related issues will be tackled through a three-fold action plan comprising a strong literacy drive, vocational training, computer skills and marketing support.

Local Networks in the fifty participating countries would be formed, to address:

- » Education of the girl child
- » Female health
- » Environment conservation
- » Poverty eradication
- » Combating HIV/AIDS
- » Stopping domestic violence
- » Putting an end to female foeticide

Reference Groups would also be formed, which would be generic, reflecting common international issues such as:

- » Ethics & Leadership
- » Education
- » Health
- » Conflict Resolution
- » Refugee Women
- » Trauma Relief and Disaster Management
- » Indigenous Women and Children
- » Environment
- » Public Policy



Education of the Girl Child

Echoing the intention of the delegates, His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, in his valedictory address, urged the each of the delegates to endeavor to educate at least 50 girl children each over the next six months. The call immediately resulted in action with 200 of the 550 delegates committing to provide education to at least 50 girl children each. That meant that one of IAWL's immediate goals of educating 10,000 girl children was accomplished on the very first day that the organisation was initiated.

Protecting the Environment

Each of the delegates was urged, on return to their own countries and homes to spread awareness and set examples for others in their communities to protect our planet and environment. Delegates were encouraged to plant more trees, reduce pollution and to be frugal in their fuel consumption.

Women Support

IAWL will continue to support women by initiating self-help groups, projects that provide employment, vocational training centres and other ventures to help sustain women living below the poverty line, across the globe.

Transforming Lives of Women Prisoners

Rehabilitation of women prisoners all over the world will continue as IAWL's ongoing project that was initiated at the first Women's Conference, 2005.

Building Homes, Securing Families

As part of the 'Model Village Project', IAWL will continue to construct homes that are registered to rural women and women who are economically challenged.

Joint Initiatives with UN Agencies

A series of issue-based *satsangs* or celebratory gatherings of music, knowledge and dance, and field-based projects in collaboration with UNICEF, UNIFEM and other similar agencies, are being conducted all over India. Issues such as female foeticide, child abandonment, gender inequity, HIV / AIDS and violence against women are focussed upon.

Child Support for 15 Zimbabwe Families

Children in Zimbabwe who have lost both parents to AIDS are now being supported by the Perth Art of Living chapter, Australia. This project was actualised immediately after the conference by delegates who attended the event.

All-India National NGO Summit

“Exploring Partnerships for Ecologically Sustainable Development”

As an outcome of the conference, an all-India summit will take place in December 2007 at the Art of Living International Centre in Bangalore, India. The summit aims to provide a platform for NGO's to interact on generating solutions and forming partnerships on the key environmental issues of the country.





Celebrating Women

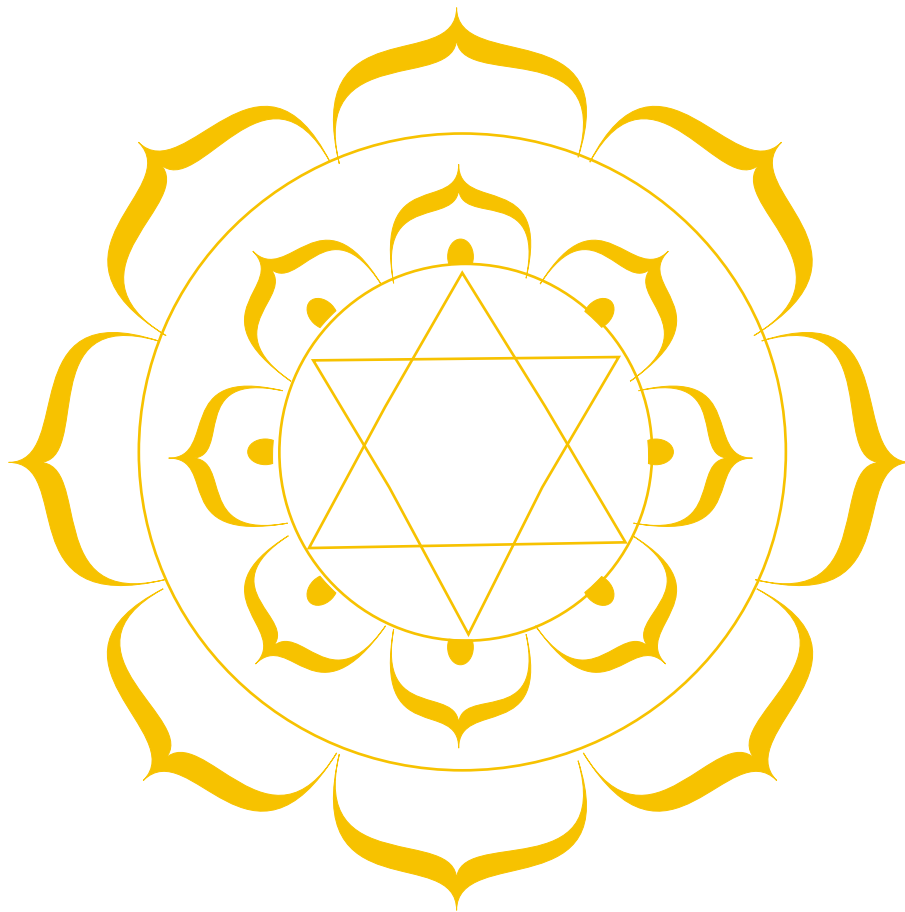
**2nd INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S CONFERENCE JUNE 2007**
8-10th June 2007, Bangalore, India

Icchā Shakti, Kriyā Shakti, Gnāna Shakti

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WOMEN'S CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT

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